

## Visalia, Mike Chrisman, to leave state agency job

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Visalia rancher Mike Chrisman was named director for the new Southwest Partnership Office of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation after announcing this week that he is resigning as state's Secretary for Natural Resources.

In his new position he'll oversee the foundation's efforts to protect and restore natural resources in California, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah.

"I've been secretary now for a little over six years and, quite frankly, it's the best job I've ever had," Chrisman said.

His state service ends Feb. 1, when he will be replaced by Lester Snow, director of the California Department of Water Resources. Chrisman said he had planned to stay as secretary until the end of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration, but that the opportunity with the foundation was too good to resist.

"I'm going to help grow staff and programs as we move forward," he said. "And for me, it's a tremendous opportunity doing just the type of thing I want to do."

Chrisman said the new job will allow him to work from his home in Visalia and be nearer his wife, two children and five grandchildren. He will visit San Francisco on business and take trips throughout the Southwest on a regular basis, he said.

Chrisman was appointed by Schwarzenegger in November 2003 and was the governor's chief adviser on natural resource policies and activities. He oversaw 25 programs dealing with California's natural and cultural resources.

"The toughest decision that we had to deal with were decisions that were left unresolved for 25 years, and the challenges were putting a coalition together to get the job done," he said. "The biggest challenge we have right now is the downward economy and the impact that has on the budget."

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The agency's major accomplishments during his years as secretary, he said, included creating the Ocean Action Plan in 2004, which spawned the California Ocean Protection Council and the **Sierra** Nevada Conservancy. He also helped push the governor's recently passed water legislation.

Prior to his appointment as secretary, Chrisman was a regional manager for Southern California Edison for seven years. Before that he was undersecretary for the California Department of Food and Agriculture from 1994 to 1996.

In 1997, Chrisman was appointed to the California Fish and Game Commission, where he was chairman of the Wildlife **Conservation** Board. From 1991 to 1994 he was deputy secretary for operations and legislation for the Natural Resources Agency. He was chief of staff for former Assemblyman Bill Jones from 1986 to 1991.

Chrisman is owner/partner of the Chrisman Ranch in Visalia and was named Agriculturist of the Year by the Tulare County Farm Bureau in 2004.

A 1962 Mt. Whitney High School graduate, Chrisman has volunteered as president of the Tulare County Farm Bureau and chairman of the board for the Great Valley Center.

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